

Date: November 4, 2015

Case: DCPS Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Hearing



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DCPS PUBLIC FISCAL YEAR 2017 BUDGET HEARING

Wednesday, November 4, 2015

Stuart-Hobson Middle School

410 E St., N.E.

Washington, DC

The public budget hearing, pursuant to notice,
convened at 6:05 p.m.

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 (6:05 p.m.)

3 MS. KULKARNI: We're going to go ahead and
4 get started. Tonight we have a packed agenda. So
5 welcome. My name is Anjali Kulkarni. I'm the Deputy
6 Chief of Strategic School Planning here at DCPS. And
7 we are excited to kick off the FY-17 budget season
8 this year.

9 So a few things, a quick review of the
10 agenda. And if there are any Spanish speakers, we
11 have a translator over here. And she'll be working
12 with you tonight.

13 So a quick review of the agenda. We're
14 going to start with a little review of the budget
15 timeline and the Chancellor will go into the focus
16 areas for the fiscal year '17. We'll jump into the
17 public testimony and then we'll wrap up with some
18 ways that folks can get involved in the budget
19 process this season.

20 What you'll hear tonight. You'll hear
21 what we're thinking for this fiscal year. What are
22 our biggest challenges that we're hoping to address.

1 We'll hear what you're thinking. We'll hear -- we'll
2 get your thoughts on how we should be spending our
3 funding this year. And lastly, this is just the
4 kickoff, so we'll talk through in just a second all
5 of the opportunities that you can use to engage in
6 the budget process this year.

7 So, quickly, this is the budget timeline
8 for this year. There are a lot of dots up there. So
9 I'm just going to highlight a few. If you see the
10 red dot to your left, that is sort of the you are
11 here button. So that is tonight, the kickoff of the
12 budget season.

13 There are a few meetings that I wanted to
14 highlight. We will be holding as we did in last year
15 we'll be holding meetings for school communities for
16 the principal and their LSAT teams. There will be
17 three citywide and they'll get a chance to give input
18 on the focus areas for DCPS this year.

19 A few other highlights and some really
20 great news. In prior years principals and their LSAT
21 teams have not gotten a ton of time to build out
22 their budgets. This year we are starting, if you've

1 noticed, LSAT meetings, hearings, they tend to happen
2 a little bit later. We're jumpstarting the process
3 this year to give principals three weeks and not one
4 week or four days to build out their budget. And so
5 we're hoping that gives school communities more time
6 to provide input into the process.

7 And then, again, budgets will be due March
8 7th, and outside of that the process will largely
9 look the same.

10 And now I'm going to hand it over to the
11 Chancellor for her to talk through some of the focus
12 areas for this year.

13 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Thank you, Anjali.
14 Good evening, everybody. I am excited to kick off
15 our fiscal year '17 budget planning process. And I'm
16 excited for two reasons. One because the work that
17 -- the investments that we've made in the past work
18 have been good and have taken us a very long way and
19 we have a lot more work to do. And I think we get to
20 the best solutions when we're able to do that work
21 with our constituents.

22 I'm also really pleased that we've been

1 able to make some adjustments to the budget schedule
2 working cooperatively with the mayor's office to give
3 schools much more time to work on their budgets is
4 something that we heard resoundingly. We've heard it
5 resoundingly from our communities and we've worked
6 really hard to be able to try to give schools more
7 time. And so I think, again, that will get us to
8 better answers, better solutions for the work that
9 we're trying to do.

10 As many of you know, we're currently in
11 the fourth year of our capital commitment goals. Our
12 goals are incredibly ambitious, but we are well on
13 our way to achieving a majority of them. And tonight
14 I just want to spend a few minutes talking about how
15 the past investments that we've made have led to our
16 progress and I want to tell you what I think are
17 still some big challenges that I feel like we need to
18 address.

19 So one of our biggest successes is student
20 enrollment. After decades of enrollment declines,
21 we've now seen our enrollment increase for four
22 consecutive years. This didn't happen by accident.

1 While no one factor led to enrollment increases,
2 we've heard from parents that they want their schools
3 to offer a full range of subjects, the four core
4 subjects, but also art, music, PE, library,
5 technology, and foreign language. Three years ago we
6 made investments to ensure that all elementary
7 schools offered a full range of courses. Last year
8 we worked to ensure that all middle grade students
9 had the same opportunities. And this school year
10 we're ensuring that every high school student has
11 access to the core subject areas at least six AP
12 classes and 20 electives.

13 Our schools are offering the kinds of
14 experiences that our community has demanded and the
15 result is people voting with their feet and coming
16 back to DCPS through increased enrollment.

17 We've also made increasing student
18 satisfaction a priority. We've consistently made
19 investments to improve student satisfaction in
20 addition to providing a full range of courses for our
21 young people. Last year we devoted \$5 million to
22 help schools pay for field trips, social services,

1 extracurricular activities, and other things that
2 students said would make school more enjoyable. And
3 we saw a significant jump in our satisfaction rates.
4 As a result of that investment, we are now on track
5 to reach our students' satisfaction goal by 2017. We
6 -- this is a clear example of making sure that our
7 investment matched a challenge and it's helping us to
8 realize success.

9 When we set a graduation rate goal of 75
10 percent people thought that would be difficult to
11 reach. Just over half of our students at the time
12 were graduating in four years. But with six point
13 gains over the last year, we've put ourselves on
14 track to meet this goal of 75 percent graduation
15 rates. How did we do it? Not by accident.

16 Two years ago we created and invested in
17 stronger supports for our high school students
18 including ninth grade academies to help students
19 through their challenging first year of school. That
20 investment is already paying off, but lots of the
21 other things that we're doing to improve the
22 graduation rate are helping us to be on track to

1 reach our goal by 2017.

2 As many of you know, we only so far have
3 data -- test score data -- from one grade for last
4 school year. As you know, we've transitioned to the
5 new more rigorous PARCC test. And based on this test
6 we expected to see a dip in student achievement.
7 That being said, we have a lot of reason for optimism
8 about student performance. Our overall student
9 growth for fourth graders, once again led the nation
10 in the 2015 administration of the trial urban
11 district assessment of the NAPE.

12 We also know that our performance on the
13 tenth grade PARCC assessment show promise and that
14 our students outperform charter schools. We still
15 have a long way to go, but we have a track record of
16 focusing and fixing.

17 Finally, we know that the investments we
18 made, including the work we've done to ensure that
19 every student is receiving high quality instruction
20 is having a real impact on student learning. When we
21 started this work, we were literally on this side of
22 the table and now we are on that side of the table.

1 Finally, I guess that goes with this
2 slide. Let's see, I think there are a couple of
3 places where despite the progress that we've made, we
4 actually need to do a lot more. The one goal where I
5 feel like we have to do a considerable amount of work
6 is in addressing the needs of our lowest performing
7 schools. There are individual schools where we've
8 made remarkable progress. But overall we still face
9 significant gaps in performance. Many of our
10 previous investments have paid off. For example,
11 three years ago when we extended the day -- the
12 school day for eight of our lowest performing schools
13 we saw immediate improvements in student outcomes.
14 This is an area that I feel that we've got to think
15 differently about and accelerate out progress in the
16 coming years.

17 Which leads me to what I think our next
18 set of challenges is. As we think about our upcoming
19 budget for the school year, I want to share with you
20 the areas that still keep me up at night.

21 So, first, as I just said, I'm not happy
22 with the progress that we're making in our lowest

1 performing schools across the board. This is a clear
2 area of focus for me.

3 Secondly, our schools are under increasing
4 pressure to offer more opportunities for our
5 students. How can we make sure that we have enough
6 time to offer every student the foundational skills
7 that they need plus the opportunities to explore
8 their interests and passions?

9 Third, our workforce has never been
10 stronger. But we still need to do more to help our
11 teachers prepare our students for the rigors of
12 college and a career. What can we do to help? What
13 more can we do to help our teachers help our students
14 reach high standards?

15 And, finally, our graduation rate is
16 making tremendous progress. But we still lose 19
17 percent of our students as dropouts. How can we make
18 sure that our high schools are situated to help all
19 of our students prepare for a bright future?

20 Those are the big things keeping me up at
21 night right now. Of course, there are 750 little
22 things, but I'm also looking forward to hearing what

1 keeps you up at night. Because together I think we
2 can put some solutions in place that keeps DCPS
3 rising, but also helps us hit some of the areas that
4 we haven't yet addressed.

5 So, with that, I'll ask Anjali to get us
6 started on the testimony and I look forward to
7 hearing from you this evening.

8 MS. KULKARNI: Here we go. So I'm just
9 going to review a few guidelines for tonight.

10 Again, as we outlined testimony will be
11 five minutes. We'll have a timer. So you'll hear
12 sort of a noise when it's over which we'll give you a
13 signal to wrap it up.

14 Groups, if there are groups, we ask that
15 you identify one speaker to testify on behalf of the
16 entire group. And, please speak into the microphone
17 and speak slowly and clearly so that we can record
18 and hear you. And then with that we will get
19 started. So we're going to ask folks to line up at
20 these -- and you should have -- yeah, there are
21 numbers. That's what I'm trying -- yep. So we're
22 going to ask folks to come up one by one by your

1 number and we can go side to side depending on what
2 side you are sitting on. Whatever is more convenient
3 for you.

4 So we'll start with number one.

5 Number five. Number five.

6 MR. SERRETTE: I thought I was going to be
7 number five even though I got the first slot. So I'm
8 Kyle Serrette and I'm a parent of a student at Minor
9 Elementary School. And I'd like to talk to you about
10 strategies that we've seen work in other geographies,
11 some strategies that we're seeing D.C. dip their toe
12 into and figure out whether we can increase our
13 investment there.

14 Right now there's a pretty large gap
15 between our high performing and high income schools
16 and our lower income schools. Right? And that's not
17 unique to D.C. It's a phenomenon that occurs around
18 the country.

19 And we're really happy that D.C. has
20 started to dip its toe into the community school
21 strategy. Just for folks who don't know, in 2012,
22 the D.C. City Council passed a resolution creating

1 five schools. Last year it created one more school.
2 And then there's two more schools that got added in
3 this incoming year. So there are about 5,000
4 community schools in the United States. Right? So
5 it's great that D.C. is starting into this strategy.

6 But what I find that a lot of folks don't
7 know is that the community schools that really do a
8 good job have turned out some amazing results. So
9 Cincinnati was starting to see amazing divestment
10 from their schools in the 1990s and the 2000s, but
11 when they started the community school strategy in
12 2003, 34 out of their 55 schools are now community
13 schools, they shrank their achievement gap between
14 their high income and low income, black and white,
15 from 14.5 percent to 4.5 percent. I challenge you to
16 find any other city that's been able to accomplish
17 that. They used the community school strategy in
18 order to achieve it which I think is strong.

19 I'll use a few other examples of folks who
20 aren't familiar with this strategy. With the Web
21 Middle School in Austin, Texas. This is a school
22 that was getting ready to close. It was the

1 worst-performing Title I school in the city. And
2 then they instituted the community school strategy in
3 2009 and today they are the highest-performing Title
4 I school. They were able to double their enrollment
5 and they have the highest test scores of the Title I
6 schools in that area. Right?

7 Baltimore has gone big into this strategy
8 and so have a number of -- I think Bill DiBlasio is
9 spending over \$120 million on community schools in
10 New York City. Right? So you can get that I'm a big
11 supporter of community schools. But I also happen to
12 be a father of a student in our public schools, and
13 I'm very happy to be that. But I think that even
14 though we've dipped our toe into this strategy, we
15 need to go ambitious and big. Right?

16 What keeps you up at night keeps us up at
17 night too. Right? How do we get our lowest
18 performing schools to higher performing by supporting
19 the needs of the students in those schools and the
20 teachers and the principals and the such.

21 So this year -- this past year, we had to
22 decide between having a PE teacher and a science

1 teacher. And we chose PE. And so we don't have a
2 science teacher in our school. So that's one of the
3 decisions our principal had to make. We didn't have
4 an LSAT last year, now I'm the chair of LSAT for our
5 school and we're going to try to make better
6 investments. But I think that our lowest performing
7 schools are starting to have to make choices like the
8 difference between a PE teacher and a science
9 teacher. And I know our more well-resourced areas
10 you'll have to make those decisions. And I'd like to
11 just put forward that -- let's think deeply about the
12 recommendations that the -- I think there's a
13 community -- what's it called here -- it's a
14 community school advisory committee for the mayor,
15 right? They recommended that D.C. become a community
16 school city in 2017. Let's do it, right.

17 Let's put in those resources and then
18 let's see what happens in five years. Because that
19 tends to be the timeline.

20 Thank you. Again, it's Kyle Serrette.

21 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: I just want to say
22 two quick things. And I promised to my people I

1 won't try to respond to ever single person's thing,
2 otherwise we'll be here all night.

3 But two quick things. So one, you
4 shouldn't have to choose between a science teacher
5 and a PE teacher. And one of the struggles that we
6 have is, you know, we'll fund schools for one set of
7 things and then schools make local decisions. And I
8 think we want schools to be able to choose what's
9 right for their students, but we don't want them to
10 make those kinds of choices. So we're going to
11 follow up on that.

12 The second piece is, I've actually been to
13 Cincinnati to see the community schools model and,
14 you know, in all fairness what we've allocated for
15 community schools is not what it takes to do real
16 community schools. And I don't think people here
17 have a full understanding. If we're going to do
18 community schools big and right, it means that we
19 have to look at our modernization program and figure
20 out how we provide for social services to be built
21 into the school and also be able to serve the
22 community. Right? And so that means a different

1 conversation around modernization at least with the
2 buildings that we have moving forward to truly make
3 this a community schools motto. Community schools is
4 not keeping the school open until midnight so people
5 can play basketball. Community schools are, you
6 know, institutions where social services are also
7 provided in school for students, but also for the
8 community.

9 And I think we -- and I'm happy to do it
10 with you -- need to do some more educating to our
11 folks to really be able to move forward with the
12 community schools model.

13 Can seven be on deck?

14 MS. HARPER: Hi, thanks for having us
15 tonight. My name is Holly Harper and I'm a parent,
16 PTO leader, and our visioning team chair at Minor
17 Elementary School, a DCPS focus school.

18 Over the past few years D.C. Minor
19 Elementary has struggled with four of the five of the
20 DCPS goals you outlined tonight. We've had
21 decreasing enrollment, leadership upheaval,
22 difficulty retaining students due to dissatisfaction

1 and declining test scores.

2 Recently a group of parents including Kyle
3 and myself and a number of other families, have come
4 together to reestablish our LSAT for the first time
5 in institutional memory, establish our PTO again
6 after dozens of families transferred out. And
7 through these organizations established a visioning
8 committee to make recommendations on the strategic
9 future of Minor.

10 Our combined efforts already have resulted
11 in successes ranging from meeting immediate school
12 needs such as procuring a washer and dryer for our
13 many homeless families, fundraising and outreach
14 events such as a garden fun day and in-school events
15 such as establishing a back-to-school partnership
16 with Folger Shakespeare Library.

17 We have also identified serious
18 challenges. Our visioning team has identified our
19 short-term, medium-term, and long-term priorities and
20 we need help making them a reality. In the
21 short-term we need help from DCPS in supporting our
22 family engagement in our students. We are all new to

1 this process and we are trying to bring in the
2 students and families that have been historically
3 disenfranchised in our school community strategic
4 planning.

5 We need support in this budget cycle and
6 we plan to get organized and we plan to be back. If
7 we aren't supported now, we'll be doing a disservice
8 to Minor. We'll see families transfer away, more
9 declining enrollment and stagnation as we wait
10 another full year to see positive change. We can't
11 have another full year of status quo.

12 Our LSAT visioning team and PTO have
13 narrowed it down to three things. Number one,
14 technology. Our building is one of the finest in
15 DCPS. If you've been, it's only ten years old and
16 it's gorgeous, but we have eight to ten-year-old
17 computers in the building. All of our smart boards
18 are hand-me-downs from a school that was getting rid
19 of their old technology and ours are five to ten
20 years old.

21 We can't even run some of the DCPS testing
22 and educational curriculum programs on our computers

1 because they don't support the software because we
2 can't upgrade to new operating systems.

3 Number two, as you might imagine, we want
4 to fund a community school coordinator. We have a
5 great facility. We are collocated right near
6 Rosedale Recreation Center and the Rosedale Library.
7 Between our two facilities in our community, we can
8 have this program and we can demonstrate this model
9 in our community successfully.

10 Right now we have approximately 10 percent
11 of our students in homeless shelters, about 90
12 percent of our students on free and reduced lunch and
13 we know community school coordinators can be funded
14 through Title I. We know that they can be funded
15 outside of a grant. So we want to be a community
16 school by fall 2016 and we're working with our LSAT
17 to find some money to match what DCPS support can
18 give us.

19 Number three, curriculum. There's been a
20 lot of talk about bringing something special to
21 Minor. People have batted around ID or language
22 emersion and I speak for our visioning team when I

1 say we're looking for something special. We are
2 looking for having representative feedback from all
3 of our families. We're doing surveying and needs
4 assessment. And by the end of January, we are
5 committed to doing what's best for all of our
6 students and our community at Minor. Whether we will
7 be asking for immediate assistance to bring back our
8 science teacher, if we go toward STEM or if we want
9 an additional language instructor, if we start to
10 support emersion. But we're going to need help.

11 Most of our volunteers are brand-new to
12 the school action plan, the budget processes, and
13 working as parent advocates for our school. But we
14 will have answers. We are already hard at work and
15 we will come back with specific requests, specific
16 allocations and specific gaps so we can move forward
17 with funding our priorities. And we can't do it
18 alone. We need DCPS support or Minor will continue
19 to flounder. And we do not want to go from a focus
20 to a priority school. We can't go backwards.

21 In many ways we're a ship without a rudder
22 and we're trying to steer it, but we need support and

1 we need help. The status quo isn't good for our
2 community. So please help us move forward together
3 by making Minor a technologically advanced community
4 school with a challenging and attractive curriculum
5 for our neighborhood.

6 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Thank you.

7 MS. BHAT: Good evening. Can you hear me?
8 Good evening, Chancellor Henderson. Thank you for
9 the opportunity to speak today. Can you hear me?

10 My name is Soumya Bhat and I'm the
11 Education Analyst for the D.C. Fiscal Policy
12 Institute. I'd like to take this opportunity to
13 discuss two aspects of DCPS budgets.

14 First the improved budgeting planning
15 timeline and the strategic use of at-risk funding in
16 our schools.

17 At last year's DCPS budget hearing DCFPI
18 testified about the need to extend the extremely
19 short budget development timeline given to schools
20 every year. So we are so glad to see that DCPS is
21 starting fiscal year '17 budget planning and
22 engagement in November and plans to give schools

1 their initial allocations in February, a month
2 earlier than usual. While there may still be changes
3 that will need to be made after the mayor sets the
4 official mark for schools in March, this shift in the
5 budget timeline will give schools a much needed
6 cushion to make budget decisions. Moving up the DCPS
7 budget timeline will also give principals, LSATs, and
8 parents a greater say in their school's budget next
9 year. We look forward to seeing this timeline in
10 action.

11 Second, I would like to speak to the
12 strategic use of at-risk funding within DCPS. Now in
13 its second year of implementation these resources
14 were added to the formula to help our high-poverty
15 schools provide programming and supports for students
16 considered them most at risk of academic failure due
17 to poverty. This year DCPS received nearly 45
18 million in at-risk funding which was allocated
19 proportionally to schools.

20 This funding represents a great
21 opportunity for schools that serve large numbers of
22 low-income students and we would like to see it

1 allocated as strategically as possible to meet each
2 school's needs. We believe the funding was
3 distributed this school year with some limited
4 flexibility for schools. Principals were given a set
5 of choices to use this funding, many of which were
6 preexisting DCPS priorities such as extending the
7 school day, middle and high school staffing and arts
8 programming in elementary schools.

9 We'd like to ensure that there is more
10 flexibility for principals and LSATs to agree on
11 using the funds to meet an unmet need in our school.
12 For example, to provide quality before and after
13 school programming, adopt new parent engagement
14 strategies, or to offer more supports for homeless
15 students or even for community school coordinators.

16 It's also important to ensure at-risk
17 funds are used to enhance school resources and not
18 fill gaps in core staffing which should be funded
19 adequately through the formula. A scan of the FY-16
20 school budgets indicates about one-third of these
21 resources may be being used to supplant rather than
22 supplement local school budgets for general education

1 purposes. If this is to be a trend there needs to be
2 a better way to distribute at-risk funds at schools.

3 This budget season we encourage DCPS to
4 use the earlier timeline to really engage with school
5 principals about their needs and educate them and
6 their LSATs on the unique opportunity provided by
7 at-risk funding. This could mean developing a
8 written plan or having some narrative description
9 about how they propose to use their funds and to just
10 ensure that each school considers using those funds
11 as intentionally as possible.

12 Thank you for the opportunity to offer
13 input on the '17 DCPS budget. I'd be happy to answer
14 any questions. Thanks.

15 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Thank you very
16 much.

17 MS. D'AURORA: Number eight.

18 MR. FREEDHOLM: Good evening. Happy to
19 see so many Minor parents here, S.C. scores Minor.

20 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Can you speak a
21 little bit --

22 MR. FREEDHOLM: Totally, yes. I was just

1 saying, happy to see so many Minor parents here, one
2 of our model programs. My name is Jeff Freedholm.
3 I'm currently the community engagement director at
4 D.C. Scores. I'm also a former special education
5 teacher at Powell Elementary School in Ward Four and
6 a current Ward One resident.

7 Basically D.C. Scores has been providing
8 free after school programming and summer camps for
9 third through eighth graders now for 21 years in D.C.
10 Mostly all its schools are characterized by
11 entrenched poverty. We provide our program on school
12 campuses and this year are partnering with 30 DCPS
13 schools. Basically our approach is unique in that it
14 integrates soccer, poetry and service learning and
15 has been adapted as a model by the DCPS out of school
16 time office for optimal programming.

17 I'm basically here to testify in the hope
18 that as DCPS structures its FY-17 budget that you
19 consider the crucial role that after school programs
20 like D.C. Scores play in the development of our
21 children enrolled in our schools. Study after study
22 confirms that after school programs are critical to

1 the health and well being of all children, especially
2 at-risk children like the ones at D.C. Scores and so
3 many DCPS campuses.

4 I could go on for hours about our impact,
5 but I'll just make a simple point. Each year we hire
6 approximately 115 DCPS teachers to work with our
7 students as our writing and soccer coaches. We train
8 them in our curriculum and also in positive youth
9 development practices. These teachers repeatedly
10 tell us that being part of D.C. Scores and after
11 school fundamentally changes for the better not only
12 their students' academic, physical health, and
13 well-being outcomes, but also their teachers' own
14 relationships with students and families and
15 teachers' feelings about their profession.

16 Myself, personally, when I was a DCPS
17 school teacher work three days after school. I
18 witnessed first-hand the impact that after school
19 programming had for my students and for the teachers.
20 Providing children with the structured opportunity to
21 explore enrichment that does not fall within the lens
22 of day-to-day school programming was really crucial

1 to our students becoming unique and confident
2 individuals.

3 Equally important, creating that space
4 where teachers and students interact outside that
5 normal classroom really helped me establish a bond
6 with my students that I considered invaluable. They
7 were better for it, I was better for it. And that
8 was because of after-school programming.

9 As you know, DCPS out of school time
10 office plays an important role in coordinating
11 after-school program likes ours, making it possible
12 for us to effectively meet both school and student
13 needs. Like many of our peer programs, D.C. Scores
14 relies on school facilities such as classrooms,
15 fields and the like being accessible until 5:30, 6:30
16 or even 6 p.m., or even later. We just urge that
17 FY-17 budget planning process consider the value of
18 our programming and after-school programming
19 throughout D.C. to make sure that these campuses
20 remain open well past 4:15. It's important not just
21 for the kids, but also for the parents and guardians
22 who rely on having programs provide safe nurturing,

1 supervised environments for their kids until the end
2 of the work day.

3 Thanks for the opportunity to testify and
4 for all you guys do.

5 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Thank you. We
6 appreciate our nonprofit partners. I say all the
7 time we are DCPS and we can do this, but we can't do
8 it alone. And our nonprofits partners, especially
9 our out of school time providers support us
10 tremendously. And so -- and, you know, D.C. Scores
11 has a special place in my heart. I know Julie
12 Kennedy and was around when she founded it. My son
13 had the opportunity to participate in the after care
14 program last summer during summer school. And so, I
15 think the programs -- and I've been at the poetry
16 slam, and whatnot. I think programs like D.C. Scores
17 and all of our nonprofit partners provide us with an
18 immeasurable service. So thank you.

19 Nine and ten.

20 MS. D'AURORA: Eleven and 12.

21 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Eleven and 12.
22 What is going on?

1 MR. MacPHERSON: Good evening, Chancellor.
2 I would say that I need no introduction. But I will
3 introduce myself anyway. Peter MacPherson. I lived
4 here on Capitol Hill. My daughter went through DCPS
5 pre-K all the way through 12th grade. And the
6 quality of the education that she received enabled
7 her to attend Northwestern University. Well, she and
8 all of our money attend Northwestern University.

9 Chancellor, I brought a visual aid because
10 I want to use some things in this auditorium to sort
11 of amplify my --

12 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Can you pick up the
13 -- yeah.

14 MR. MacPHERSON: I always wanted to be a
15 rock star. Anyway, use some things in this
16 auditorium to reinforce a larger argument that I want
17 to make. I brought this. If you look over here, you
18 see this bubbling out here. You see it throughout
19 this wall. This building, this auditorium was
20 modernized this past summer at a cost of, I think, a
21 million dollars or nearly so. And what I just
22 pointed to you is something over the past eight years

1 that has been repaired seven times. Now, seven
2 times. And I mean, you know, you just think about
3 the waste that's implicit in that. You know, that we
4 don't get to the underlying cause. And, you know, I
5 think what this illustrates, and, you know, is the
6 fundamental problem we have with -- and that I have
7 with DCPS is, you know, the follow through. You
8 know, the honest-to-God effort to make sure the
9 things the system undertakes are actually completed.
10 Now, like I said, if this isn't dealt with now while
11 the building is still undergoing some modernization
12 it's going to stay like that until it becomes such a
13 big issue that we're going to have to write a much
14 bigger check to fix it.

15 You know, I've got a really long list --
16 punch list items -- you know, things that need to be
17 taken care of in this building in spite of the \$50
18 million that's been spent on it in the past four
19 years. You know, and we keep coming back to this
20 issue of, you know, really seeing things through. I
21 mean, there are a lot of things on that list that a
22 school community is getting every indication aren't

1 actually going to be taken care of.

2 Up here on the balcony -- you can't see it
3 probably -- but there is a spotlight that was bought
4 for this auditorium. We've replaced all of its
5 lighting, but this spotlight, it needs to be
6 physically installed. And the Department of General
7 Services says, well, but there isn't the money to
8 install the spotlight. So we're going to have this
9 expensive spotlight that is supposed to be part of
10 the equipment package for this auditorium sit there
11 unused.

12 So, you know, you and I obviously have had
13 our issues mostly about libraries in the past few
14 years. And, you know, this becomes another issue of
15 sort of follow through of, you know, being able to
16 count on the system to deliver what it says it's
17 going to deal with.

18 Now, besides the million bucks that was
19 spent on this auditorium, we spent \$650,000 on a
20 beautiful new library downstairs in this building,
21 you know, that has a couple of thousand books when it
22 should have nearly 10,000. Now, you know, I don't

1 know, and this is hardly unique to this school. I
2 mean, this has happened at Johnson Middle School this
3 past summer which had its library modernized to the
4 tune of about \$450,000. You know, the thing of
5 following through of making sure that the things that
6 we say we're going to do that they get completed.

7 Building a new library and not putting any
8 new books in it, that is essentially a \$650,000 waste
9 of taxpayer money. I mean, we want that space for
10 the kinds of things that a library can do for a
11 school. And library has been an incredibly important
12 feature of this school. My daughter went to this
13 school and had a great library, great librarian. But
14 she retired and as the modernization went away, the
15 library space became more and more and more opened.
16 So the modernization helped. It brought the library
17 space back. But now, you know, it hasn't been
18 followed through with the materials. And the thing
19 is that this is the case throughout DCPS. You know
20 we have got probably 500,000 books that we need to
21 buy for this school system.

22 And, you know, that's probably about \$13,

1 14 million. But, you know, in the context of a
2 nearly billion dollar budget and the fact that you
3 only have to do that once, you do that once and then
4 every year you budget like you did for FY-16 and you
5 get a -- you know, you get a situation where it's
6 much more sustainable. It's not 13, you never --
7 thank you very much, Chancellor.

8 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Thank you, Mr.
9 MacPherson. I want to -- I guess I'll say two
10 things. One, I actually appreciate -- I know --
11 maybe you don't always feel this way, but I
12 appreciate your continued advocacy. I think you
13 raise very important issues that we have to keep our
14 eye on. We have some differences of opinion, of
15 course, but I think at the very least on the
16 modernization front there are lots of things that we
17 can be doing better and so we are working with the
18 Department of General Services to try to ensure that
19 things like this don't continue to happen.

20 Our goal is to follow through on all of
21 the things that we commit. As many of you, I'm sure,
22 are clear, you know, having 9,000 employees and

1 ancillary agencies to do all of the work that we do
2 means that sometimes we've got follow through over
3 and over and over again. But our goal is not to
4 waste the taxpayers' money. Our goal is to provide
5 state-of-the-art facilities, libraries, services, and
6 we will continue to work hard on this. So, thank
7 you, Mr. MacPherson.

8 MR. HOLM: Good evening. Chancellor
9 Henderson and committee members, I want to thank you
10 for making this process one that we can all
11 participate in more and particularly as a school
12 staff member. I'm Robert Holm, I'm a director for
13 the IT Academy at McKinley Technology High School. I
14 have some remarks that are going to be more about
15 cheering you on for what you've done with STEM
16 education in particular and some of the remarks I'm
17 going to totally change because Ms. Robinson has a
18 son in my program.

19 As the Director of the IT Academy and a
20 board member of a nonprofits that's put over 100 D.C.
21 students from five high schools into technology
22 internships, I want to advocate and cheer on and

1 advocate for even more resources towards STEM
2 education. And I would say, more than keep you up at
3 night, give you something -- the main thing is to get
4 up in the morning about, which I do, is an exciting
5 opportunity that we have in D.C.

6 We're sometimes ranked number one or two a
7 minimum of the technology jobs in the country in this
8 region. Over 200,000 job postings listed on line in
9 the last 12 months.

10 So, unfortunately too many of our young
11 people, as you know, are not prepared for those and
12 companies are recruiting from other places leaving
13 jobs open while our residents are taking lesser
14 paying jobs. So, I know that you know these things.
15 And I'm really excited about what you've done with
16 the career academies, the NAPA academy and would like
17 to advocate even more. Another thing that brings to
18 mind, you know, personally, are code whisperers,
19 Ronald and Terrell and Ben and Sean who this week
20 released an AP to DCPS parent guide. They were able
21 to do that with the partnership with Accenture, a
22 technology company to do really a professional job.

1 It's something that can impact this whole city. And,
2 of course, I applaud your work with that.

3 We have -- what I'm advocating for is even
4 more opportunities like that for more of our
5 students. And I know you're extending these, the
6 career academies. I particularly want to emphasize
7 the IT and engineering possibilities in the city.

8 We're blessed with a really unique
9 opportunity for careers for our children because of
10 this region's very large and dynamic and growing STEM
11 economy. But I do think that we've only begun to
12 address the breadth of what's possible. And STEM
13 education and the projects, hands-on projects to
14 support it are often expensive, or they're more
15 expensive than a lot of other classes. So we want to
16 advocate for growing investments STEM education and
17 prepare them for those opportunities that are at our
18 city's doorstep. So, thank you, Chancellor Henderson
19 and committee members for your work with that.

20 We hope that our successes so far embolden
21 the District to make STEM career opportunities
22 available for even more young people by boldly

1 investing in STEM programs and career guidance.

2 So, thank you.

3 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Thank you.

4 MS. D'AURORA: Thirteen and 14.

5 MS. TOPPING: Good evening. Hello. Thank
6 you so much for letting me come and speak to you
7 tonight. My name is Elizabeth Topping. I am a
8 hopeful future mother of a child who hopefully will
9 be able to attend West. And I'm here tonight to ask
10 you to please include in the 2017 budget \$3 million
11 towards renovation of West. This spring West
12 education campus was ranked the number three
13 elementary school most in need of renovation by the
14 City Council's Education Committee. It had the third
15 worst score in the entire city, a score worst than
16 even the worst high school and the worst middle
17 school in the city.

18 And I thank the Education Committee for
19 recognizing the school's needs. And I'm glad that
20 the renovation of the number one school most in need
21 of renovation was funded in the '16 budget. But,
22 unfortunately, West renovation funding was removed

1 from the annual budget for a third time and delayed
2 indefinitely.

3 West, as you may know, was built in a dark
4 era architecturally. And unfortunately it has some
5 of the era's worst features. And I'm not just
6 referring to the fact that it looks like a concrete
7 bunker. I look around and it's nothing like this
8 gorgeous school we're in now. More important, if you
9 go inside, West's open floor model which was a real
10 fad in the '70s it's now very much out of date with
11 what research says makes sense. Research has
12 demonstrated that open floor plans are bad for
13 distractability, stress levels, productivity, sick
14 days, and cognitive performance. And in an era when
15 so many kids struggle with attention issues and
16 overstimulation, an open floor model without walls
17 between classrooms is a real challenge. It hurts
18 kids' ability to focus and learn.

19 Another architectural flaw that would seem
20 unfathomable today is the school was built with few
21 windows. There are many classrooms or class spaces
22 with no windows. Add to that on an energy efficiency

1 scale of one to 100, with one being the worst
2 possible score, I'll let you guess what West scored
3 not a 12 or a 10 or a seven, they scored a one. So
4 the city could actually save money by renovating West
5 over the long term.

6 And that's not mentioning the falling
7 ceiling tiles, or mice and rats, or other issues, so
8 many at West School that they end up basically
9 putting a band-aid on a new issue every day. And as
10 you know, our kids deserve better.

11 The baby boom the city has experienced in
12 recent years has hit my neighborhood very hard. West
13 has been growing very quickly, but the sorry state of
14 the facilities is a real deterrent and makes student
15 retention very difficult. I have more in my written
16 comments, but I'll spare you because of time. I also
17 realize this is important to me because I've realized
18 how important one's environment is from my personal
19 experience. I remember that when I was in school I
20 -- one semester I took a class in a windowless
21 basement room and I just found myself not really
22 interested and not engaging, only speaking when

1 called upon. We had to move rooms the next semester.
2 We were on a higher floor with lots of light and
3 windows and I found myself jumping in and just
4 actually engaging and it really struck me how
5 critical -- how critical the space you're in as to
6 whether you learn and whether you engage. Students
7 can do decently, but will they do well and will they
8 really reach their full potential.

9 At a time when the city has set aside a
10 merely \$2 billion reserve fund to maintain our
11 excellent credit rating, and interest rates are at
12 record low levels, it only makes sense to use funds
13 from our budget to take care of our top priority, our
14 students, or use our outstanding credit rating to get
15 a cheap loan and invest in our students. And I know
16 I'm preaching to the crier here, but what's the point
17 of setting aside a \$2 billion reserve fund to
18 maintain an excellent credit rating if we don't take
19 advantage of that rating and invest in what counts?

20 After all good schools are at the heart of
21 keeping the city's population levels from falling and
22 preserving a strong tax base if we care about money?

1 In summary, kids at West deserve better.
2 The West community isn't asking for anything fancy or
3 the latest technology, we don't ask for much. I ask
4 that one, each child's classroom have a window, and
5 two, that each child's classroom have four walls and
6 a door. And three, while you're at it, you might as
7 well save some energy and money in what's tied for
8 the least energy efficient school in the city.

9 Thank you so much. I appreciate that.

10 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Thank you.

11 Are you 14?

12 MR. TAHERI: Fourteen.

13 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Fourteen?

14 MR. TAHERI: Ah, yes, 14. Hi, my name is
15 Ramin Taheri. I'm a parent of a student at school
16 within school or Goding, SWS. Thank you so much for
17 having me. I just want to touch on a couple of
18 points and my written testimony might be more
19 articulate than what I say here tonight. But bear
20 with me.

21 First of all, as you know, SWS is a unique
22 citywide school. We have a unique Regio Amelia

1 inspired curriculum that we've very proud of and the
2 staff and the community is very dedicated to. We
3 have recently undergone an expansion. That expansion
4 is ongoing. Next year we're going to add the fifth
5 grade and that's going to be the final step. And
6 what I want to do first is thank DCPS for working
7 with us and investing and supporting us in that
8 expansion.

9 We want to touch on two things basically
10 here, the budget process and then our own facility's
11 needs. First with respect to the budget process,
12 thank you again for -- and I think it's been
13 mentioned a couple times tonight -- for opening the
14 process up so early. We really appreciate that. We
15 think it's going to be fruitful.

16 We have two particular recommendations
17 that we would submit as part of this process, as this
18 goes along. The first is that we really think that
19 the LSAT should be involved in determining the
20 enrollment projections in the initial budget
21 allocations. Second, we think our school's community
22 should be given ample time to provide feedback on the

1 initial budget allocations before they're finalized
2 and submitted to central office.

3 As I said, we're very pleased to see that
4 the FY-17 process has started so early and we hope
5 that with these recommendations this is going to move
6 smoothly and be as productive as possible.

7 I just want to get into a couple of the
8 specific needs for our school. I know that there are
9 a lot of people who have had some very compelling
10 stories here. I just want to go over a couple things
11 that we think are very important for SWS.

12 Since we moved into the Goding facility a
13 couple of years ago, the teachers have been -- and
14 the staff have been -- very creative in transforming
15 the school to meet the particular specialized design
16 needs for the Regio curriculum.

17 We had -- one thing I would mention is we
18 worked with the Parks and Recreation to come up with
19 a park that is nature themed and we share that with
20 Sherwood, that process went well, and it's a result
21 that we're all very proud of.

22 But on the other side, there are a couple

1 things that I think remain unattended to. And they
2 fall into two basic area. First are facility's
3 related needs that touch on basic health and safety
4 and then second would be our -- again, particular
5 needs based on our specialize curriculum.

6 To give an example of the health and
7 safety concerns, earlier this year we had an active
8 intruder incident which obviously is the last thing
9 any parent wants to hear that has happened in school.
10 Our PA system doesn't work. It failed. The
11 principal was unable to adequately notify the rest of
12 the school. It highlights some of the problems that
13 we have in securing the building, securing the doors,
14 securing the classrooms. Thankfully no one was hurt
15 and, you know, the situation was resolved, but I
16 think that it goes to show that this is something
17 that should be at the very top of the list in terms
18 of very basic concerns of health and safety.

19 Likewise, we don't have a sprinkler
20 system. As far as I understand, that's not even code
21 compliant, but it presents a serious danger in terms
22 of fire safety. So that, again, that's something

1 that I think that just highlights the very basic
2 nature of some of the facilities needs that we have.

3 And then going beyond just the basic
4 health and safety, there are some comfort needs that
5 really, I think, affect the students and their
6 learning. We have a chronically failing HVAC system.
7 It's hot when it should be cool. It's cool when it
8 should be hot, and it's difficult to learn in an
9 environment like that. We have a medically -- a
10 couple classrooms for medically fragile students.
11 And some of the doors, and, again, the HVAC system, I
12 think it really compromises their ability to learn
13 and could potentially even present violations of the
14 ADA.

15 And then, finally, and this is slightly
16 unrelated to health and safety, but we have
17 classrooms that are 25 to 35 percent smaller than the
18 DCPS standard. I think it goes to learning and it
19 could potentially compromise learning. And, again,
20 it is not in line with the sort of specialize
21 curriculum that our teachers feel is an important
22 part of the Regio design.

1 One last thing before I leave is, I want
2 to take this opportunity to address the special
3 education personnel allocations and just question
4 whether we're missing an opportunity to invest more
5 in early identification and resources to students who
6 don't necessarily need, for instance, 15 hours in
7 their individualized education program. We feel as
8 though we can do a lot more for that community if we
9 just had the allocation. So we would submit that you
10 please consider making a more substantial investment
11 there.

12 Again, thank you so much for opening this
13 process up early and giving me the opportunity to
14 speak. Thank you.

15 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Thank you. I just
16 wanted to share. Many of the facility's issues that
17 you raised about school within a school at Goding
18 we're aware of and working on. So you should look
19 forward to seeing continued progress on that front.

20 MR. TAHERI: Thank you so much.

21 MS. D'AURORA: Numbers 15 and then 19.

22 MR. WELLES: Good evening, everyone. My

1 name is Martin Welles. I'm a parent of three
2 children at Amidon-Bowen Elementary School. I'm the
3 president of the PTA. I served on the Chancellor's
4 parent cabinet and on the school assignment and
5 boundary committee.

6 Last year's budget process hopefully was
7 the last time we have to go through that midnight
8 panic. And I want to point out an issue that you're
9 familiar with, but probably the audience is not, and
10 it's the PWP Grant. I think the PWP Grant, Proving
11 What's Possible is a good thing. It allows the
12 schools to make some choices about what they need in
13 their schools. However, the procurement process with
14 that was a nightmare scenario due to administrative
15 error on a DCPS employee, we didn't get a purchase
16 order in time. Mistakes happen, I understand that.
17 It should not take nine months to get \$4,600 paid to
18 an artist who is doing the school a favor. Right?
19 Nationally recognized artist.

20 You've heard from me for those nine months
21 that hopefully we can work on the procurement process
22 and fix it. And if we're going to have the PWP

1 grants another problem is that when you submit your
2 grant application you put down a line item for things
3 that you need. We needed a scissor lift to hang some
4 art from the ceiling. It turns out we could get away
5 with a ladder. Well, because we budgeted that money
6 for a scissor lift, the money disappeared, you know,
7 we should have been able to use that for something
8 else.

9 It's the procurement process. I realize
10 that it's not your doing, but we need to fix that.

11 Are there any city year people here in the
12 room here? I'd just like to give a shout out.
13 They're doing a fantastic job at Amidon-Bowen. I
14 think half their funding comes from the budget and
15 the other half comes from a grant. But having those
16 ten extra adults on the playgrounds, in the
17 classrooms, in the cafeterias is a fantastic
18 tremendous thing and it's a great -- and I think
19 they're paid -- well, I know they're paid lower than
20 a teacher because they're doing part of it right out
21 of college. But, it's great. So if we could get
22 more funding for that, that would be fantastic. If

1 we lose our grant, I would like to see that replaced
2 with a budgetary item for that.

3 Specials. I know when I left the parents
4 cabinet, the last thing I said to you, one of our
5 advantages over at charter schools is our sports.
6 Thank you for allocating additional resources into
7 the sports program. I will say Amidon-Bowen is now
8 the defending champions in kickball. There's no
9 better sport than kickball. City champions right
10 here. We have the first, second, and ninth place
11 finishers in cross-country. I noticed we put Drew up
12 on the board. My impression of Drew -- I've never
13 been there, I've never seen it -- based on their
14 sports program is that that is a good school. Right?
15 By sports alone. We're competing against Channing
16 and Merch and Lafayette, and all those upper
17 northwest schools and now they're looking out for us.
18 And they say, well, where is Amidon-Bowen? What
19 school is that? But they know now.

20 And then my daughter went to the library
21 Monday and said, "I'd like a copy of the Diary of
22 Anne Frank". We don't have that book. Well, why

1 don't we have a copy of the Diary of Anne Frank. I
2 mean, it's a classic book. I don't know if it's
3 censorship that we're keeping it out of the schools
4 for some reason like that, or if it's that the school
5 never bought it. But if it's budgetary process, we
6 should have the money to buy books like that for
7 children who request it.

8 I remember your remarks at the state of
9 the union. I'm unclear about this Amazon central
10 library scenario. I don't know if Jeff Bezos is
11 funding that or where that's coming from. I'm
12 concerned about it. I'm with Peter MacPherson, he's
13 driving a bus and I'm bringing up the rear on that.
14 We need to fund our libraries. We need to fund our
15 librarians and have books and allocations.

16 You mentioned extended day. Amidon-Bowen
17 was one of the leaders in the extended day program.
18 I love it. It works. It's great. There's some
19 grumbling from the teachers. It makes a longer day
20 for them. Having City Year in the building, I think
21 helps relieve some pressure from the teachers. I'm
22 also in favor of a year-long school. You know, the

1 three-month summer that I had as a youth has
2 disappeared two months. Maybe we can shrink it to
3 one month and have a nice fall break as well. Be
4 mindful of the fact that the childcare industry has
5 not adopted that model. Right now they're on a
6 summer model. So if we do that, we need to figure
7 out ways to take care of children while parents work.
8 But I'm all for it.

9 You know, my children are in fourth grade
10 and third grade and I have a decision point coming
11 up. It's middle school. Right? Charter schools,
12 some of them start at fifth grade. I don't like the
13 disconnect there. I wish they'd start at sixth
14 grade. I've talked to Scott Pierson about that. But
15 I'm disappointed in some of the decisions over the
16 past three or four years with Jefferson. I'm
17 disappointed that the renovation funds were
18 reallocated. I'm disappointed that they dropped
19 their IB program. I'm disappointed that a charter
20 school has trailers on school campus grounds, even
21 though it's temporary. I am happy that we have the
22 track coach there. I think that's a good thing.

1 So I have a decision point coming up on
2 where my children go to middle school. And we'll see
3 what happens in the next couple years.

4 Thank you.

5 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: You raised a number
6 of issues. I'll just grab two of them and comment on
7 them. First on the budget and procurement issues, we
8 are working feverishly with OCFO -- sorry, the Office
9 of the Chief Financial Officer -- to figure out some
10 new ways to get our schools to be able to spend their
11 money much more easily and much more flexibly. It
12 doesn't matter if you have a budget allocation, but
13 you can't move it from a lift to a ladder, right?
14 That's not the purpose. And the Office of the Chief
15 Financial Officer has been incredibly cooperative and
16 helpful with us. SO I think you'll see some movement
17 on that front.

18 And I just want to say a word on libraries
19 because I don't want people to walk away with the
20 idea that we are not continuing our commitment to
21 refurbish all of our libraries. We are buying books
22 in the millions every year. In addition to the per

1 pupil allotment that we put into the budget, we've
2 increased library staffing. And so at this point
3 there are only two to three schools that have library
4 vacancies that aren't staffed. And the only schools
5 that don't have librarians are our alternative
6 schools and some of our partnership schools.

7 A word on the -- and I'll stop calling it
8 Amazon because I don't want you to -- Jeff Bezos has
9 nothing to do with this. But in addition to ensuring
10 that each and every library, which we can't do all at
11 the same time, but we can continue to ensure that our
12 libraries have full collections. In addition to the
13 full collections, if the Diary of Anne Frank is taken
14 out by somebody, or is not accessible, then we are
15 partnering with the D.C. public libraries to create a
16 delivery service where we will have available the
17 full stock of the citywide libraries and create a
18 distribution center where literally schools can order
19 a book if they don't have it in their current
20 inventory and have the book delivered by the D.C.
21 public library within 24 hours.

22 So in addition to ensuring that our school

1 collections are robust, we also will take advantage
2 of the citywide resources that the D.C. public
3 library has. We'll partner -- we'll probably use an
4 existing DCPS building that is underutilized and
5 generate a fleet of trucks that can actually help us
6 supplement our school collections by ensuring that
7 kids have access to lots more books than we'd be able
8 to purchase just by ourselves. So point of
9 clarification.

10 MS. LIM: Thank you and good evening.
11 This is my first time here and I see some people that
12 have really helped me get on board, and some friendly
13 faces. So thanks to everyone for the work.

14 I started losing sleep a year ago. My
15 name is Gimbiya and I am a volunteer with D.C.
16 Emergent Project.

17 I started a conversation group known as
18 Emergent for Minor. I'm an inbound parent for Minor.
19 I was just elected as a community representative to
20 the LSAT and I'm working with the vision team in
21 family outreach.

22 At this point Emergent for Minors, a

1 gathering of families who have children in the
2 school, others who are like mine, have children who
3 will be entering the school system in the upcoming
4 years. We are encouraged by the research about the
5 impact of emergent programs on individual schools,
6 students, and school districts.

7 We are inspired by the models of emergent
8 schools that are already existing within D.C. which
9 have strong programs, engaged families, and long wait
10 lists.

11 D.C. Emergent Project has testified in the
12 past and made available great statistics about the
13 impact of emergent schools ranging from closing the
14 achievement gap to ending de facto segregation in
15 school districts. These statistics are important and
16 they're available on their website, so I'm not going
17 to go through all of that tonight.

18 Tonight I'm here as a community member.
19 One who watches my families' neighbors, and friends
20 struggling to balance the demands of commuting to
21 work and commuting to schools with their students. I
22 see the ways this draws energy from our neighborhoods

1 including people moving away from the neighborhoods.
2 I would like to see our neighborhood school be a
3 unifying presence. One that welcomes and equips all
4 students for a future within the city and within the
5 wider world.

6 An Emergent program at Minor and others in
7 the city have the opportunity to be a potential where
8 the diversity of Ward six and seven come together
9 building the next generation of D.C. residents,
10 building bridges that would make a difference even
11 today.

12 Even more urgently, I come to you as a
13 mother. A mother who would like to see my daughter
14 thrive in the D.C. that she will face in 2030 and
15 beyond. I would like my daughter to be safer and
16 more secure in her career, her employment, her
17 housing, her jobs than I am.

18 I am seeing an affordable housing that
19 begins with an education that will prepare her to
20 afford the houses that she will be trying to buy in
21 this city, in a place where housing costs are going
22 up well beyond the reach of so many.

1 I'm seeing in a globalized economy that
2 she needs to be equipped with a global perspective
3 and language skills. Like many parents, I am
4 dreaming of giving my child the world and it starts
5 with pre-K.

6 As early as 2008, our President Barrack
7 Obama said, "We should have every child speaking more
8 than one language." For our young people, if you
9 have a foreign language it's a powerful tool to get a
10 job. You are so much more employable. You can be
11 part of international business. So we should be
12 emphasizing foreign languages in our schools from an
13 early age because children will actually learn
14 foreign language easier when they're five, six, or
15 seven, than when they're 46, like me.

16 President Obama has gone on to propose
17 that we need to have one million students studying
18 Chinese, an initiative that has led to the formation
19 of the 100K Strong Foundation. We have an
20 opportunity to teach Chinese in one of the larger
21 elementary schools in the city with the potential to
22 reach generations of students and prepare them for

1 the jobs that will be available in this city in the
2 next 20 and 30 years.

3 At this point to make language immersion a
4 possibility for Minor Elementary School and for other
5 schools and communities seeking this type of
6 opportunity for their students, we need to start --
7 make sure the funding is in place to support various
8 things including initial outreach and information for
9 communities to ensure that all members are aware of
10 the unique potential this type of programming has.
11 How it can help our students over the course of their
12 lives and ways that families can support their
13 students and the wider school community so believe
14 that it's something they can actually envision for
15 their own children.

16 We need to support inbound families who
17 will experience a change in the culture of the school
18 as this new program requires them to be more
19 proactive in registering for school and help them
20 continue to be committed in the program and its
21 long-term goals when there are tough transition
22 moments.

1 We need training and orientation for
2 administration staff and teachers to prepare them for
3 the transition to a bilingual learning. We need help
4 hiring and training bilingual teachers who will
5 thrive in our classrooms and with our curriculum
6 while also equipping them with D.C.-specific,
7 cross-cultural sensitivity so they can be part of the
8 communities they teach.

9 It would be great to see a creation of a
10 cross-sector task force with schools like Washington
11 Yu-Ying that are successfully providing immersion in
12 the charter forum.

13 We'd also like to see -- we also know that
14 schools will need to be equipped with curriculum
15 material, library resources, and online portals for
16 families. And as always, there's a need to ensure
17 that all aspects of educational facilities are
18 meeting the norms for healthy learning.

19 But I come to you not only with requests
20 tonight, but also with a pledge. Emergent programs
21 are hard work and to make them a success you need
22 parents who are committed to a vision of neighborhood

1 schools in an integrated community. I will be that
2 parent. I will be involved as a volunteer to connect
3 the school with a wider community and the wider city,
4 to welcome the teachers who may come from other parts
5 of the world into my community and be a part of their
6 network. To advocate not just for my child, but for
7 all children in my neighborhood, that they may grow
8 up in a way that builds relationships between us all
9 and equips us for whatever the future holds.

10 Thank you.

11 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Thank you.

12 MS. D'AURORA: Numbers 22 and 24.

13 MS. WELLS: Thank you for the opportunity
14 to testify this evening. My name is Suzanne Wells.
15 I am the parent of a fifth grader in the Tyler
16 Elementary Spanish Immersion Program. My testimony
17 this evening focuses more on questions rather than
18 comments. And specifically I'm interested in
19 learning how the DCPS Central Administration assesses
20 wait-listed schools to make strategic decisions
21 regarding the expansion of popular programs.

22 In 2006, Tyler only had 233 students. And

1 in 2006 Tyler had an innovative principal who started
2 the Spanish Immersion Program. The Spanish Immersion
3 Program was created as a strand, i.e., there
4 continued to be a special education program at the
5 school and a traditional program which today is
6 called an arts integration program.

7 When my daughter started at Tyler in 2008,
8 there was only one Spanish immersion class per grade.
9 In 2009 the Spanish immersion strand expanded and
10 rather than just one Spanish immersion class per
11 grade, an addition Spanish immersion class was added
12 at the pre-K level.

13 Today there are two Spanish immersion
14 classes up through third grade. There's been a
15 steady enrollment climb at Tyler since the Spanish
16 immersion strand was started from the 233 students at
17 Tyler in 2006, today there are 522 students at Tyler.

18 The number of students are fairly evenly
19 divided between the Spanish immersion, arts
20 integration, and special education programs.

21 I think most people would agree that the
22 number of students who are on a waitlist for a school

1 is indicative of the interest in a school, i.e.,
2 there is a high interest in attending schools that
3 have high wait lists.

4 For the current school year there are
5 almost double the number of students on the waitlist
6 for the Tyler Spanish immersion program than there
7 are for the arts integration program.

8 So my question is, how does DCPS Central
9 Administration assess the waitlist for popular
10 programs? What is being done to budget for and
11 expand popular programs? And are decisions made at
12 the Central Administration level to expand popular
13 programs, or are these decisions left to individual
14 principals?

15 I would like to suggest that DCPS consider
16 expanding the Spanish immersion program at Tyler.
17 There is a strong demand for language immersion
18 programs in D.C. and specifically there is a strong
19 demand for additional Spanish immersion seats at
20 Tyler as evidenced by the waitlist.

21 You've already heard this evening about
22 the benefits of acquiring a second language at an

1 early age and I won't repeat those benefits. But in
2 addition to the improved academic performance,
3 expanding the Spanish immersion program at Tyler is
4 in DCPS's best interest because it will keep more
5 students enrolled within DCPS.

6 Thank you.

7 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Thank you.

8 MS. HUVENDICK: Good evening. My name is
9 Nancy Huvendick and I'm DC Program Director for the
10 21st Century School Fund. And I want to thank you
11 for this opportunity this evening.

12 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Nancy, can you come
13 a little closer to the microphone?

14 MS. HUVENDICK: Is that good? Okay. I'm
15 going to focus on the importance of having a public
16 process that involves the community in planning
17 individual school medications with SIT Teams.

18 Adequately managing SIT Teams will require
19 additional budget support from the Central Office.

20 Community involvement requires attention
21 and time and it is very staff intensive. But
22 compared to hundreds of millions in the capital

1 budget yearly for schools, instituting a few simple
2 changes would move the civic dialogue forward and
3 positively at a comparatively low cost.

4 DCPS has been augmenting staff involved
5 with the capital program over the past year and
6 that's already helping.

7 The public needs to be actively involved
8 in planning for local school modernizations in order
9 that these building investments do what we all want
10 them to do, to improve education and add to
11 neighborhood revitalization in D.C.

12 Fostering civic involvement in the
13 modernization progress can help accomplish both.
14 Having DCPS in charge of individual schools' planning
15 at the local SIT Team level is positive
16 restructuring.

17 Getting planning as close as possible to
18 the students and the teachers and the parents and the
19 neighbors should result in modernized buildings that
20 function the way they need to work and in a way that
21 should be more effective and more efficient and
22 cheaper.

1 DCPS school buildings are unique. They're
2 constructed anywhere from more than a century ago to
3 the present. Even those that started as standard
4 designs have been added to on altered time and again.
5 Each site is different. And each neighborhood has a
6 different needs.

7 The planning stages are critical for
8 active input from SIT Teams and community meetings.
9 Educational specifications and the fit between the
10 program and the building design and the community use
11 depends on a back and forth dialogue between and
12 among the building users and the design team. This
13 active input is crucially important during the
14 ed-spec development concept design and detailed
15 schematic design.

16 Such discussion can have a galvanizing
17 effect on school community because it forces people,
18 the administrators, the teachers, the parents, the
19 community, the students to discuss the whole approach
20 to education in a very focused way. They've got an
21 aim at that point and they've got deadlines.

22 As we understand the new DCPS process as

1 outlined, this dialogue, especially at the initial
2 stages of the projects is largely missing whether the
3 SIT Team is tasked with communication for the larger
4 public about DCPS planning for the school community
5 more than DCPS planning with the school community.

6 We hope that in refining the process DCPS
7 will be more explicit about including detailed
8 community responses and important milestones
9 including the draft educational specifications, the
10 concept drawings, schematic drawings, and through to
11 the punch list at the end of construction as you can
12 see here at Stewart Thompson. Those users know the
13 problems.

14 Doing this requires time and staff and a
15 lot of community discussion. School communities are
16 large and changing communication requires frequent
17 reiteration of details so that the substantial number
18 of increased community members remain current with
19 planning. This requires staff time and skill and
20 patience. But the gain for DCPS is greatly increased
21 understanding from the public about how capital funds
22 are being used, and with that, greatly increased for

1 support for the school, for its programs, and its
2 students, even those from those taxpayers who do not
3 have children who use the schools.

4 It is DCPS' responsibility and in DCPS'
5 interest to encourage and support a community
6 capacity to organize active participation and SIT
7 Teams. It is in DCPS' interest to open all meetings
8 to the public and provide notice and to have regular
9 and frequent, maybe even monthly meetings because SIT
10 meeting and community meetings are the only venue
11 where individuals other than DCPS staff and school
12 administrators have a forum that includes unfiltered
13 access with the design team and the builders.

14 Projects that move forward with
15 substantial community support from the beginning
16 profit from this civic activity and are better poised
17 to flourish. It's particularly important because it
18 takes a lot of time and effort and it is especially
19 important with the remaining modernizations which are
20 heavily weighted to projects and communities that
21 tend to be under resourced.

22 So, please, look at the community

1 recommendations for the SIT process that are attached
2 to the testimony that I handed in and there's another
3 list of suggestions that are very simple things for
4 the budget process like making sure the capital --
5 that the capital projects are on the website for
6 DCPS. So you don't have to go into another website
7 to find them.

8 Thank you.

9 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Thank you.

10 MS. D'AURORA: Numbers 26 and 27.

11 MS. AMICK: Hi, we are all coming from
12 Bruce Monroe at Parkview Elementary School. Is it
13 okay if four of us stand up here and testify
14 together?

15 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Sure.

16 MS. AMICK: Great. Thank you.

17 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: We can't do sort of
18 five minutes per person though.

19 MS. AMICK: Yes, that's fine.

20 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Right. Okay.

21 MS. AMICK: We would still do that --

22 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Okay.

1 MS. CASH: My name is June Cash.

2 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: I'm going to ask
3 you, can you pick up the mike and, yeah, bring it
4 right up to your mouth so we can hear you loudly and
5 clearly. Thank you.

6 MS. CASH: My name is June Cash. My
7 granddaughter is a first grader at Bruce Monroe at
8 Parkview. I have a personal interest in funding for
9 before and after care programming at Bruce Monroe.
10 The program is a must for parents, guardians and
11 caregivers who are working, attending college, and
12 need a safe environment for their school-aged
13 children while the parents try to make a better life
14 for the family.

15 Before I received before and after care I
16 was continuously late for work in the morning and had
17 to leave work early to receive my granddaughter from
18 school. It seemed the biggest problem is not that
19 there is not enough students for before and after
20 care, the problem seemed to be funding for the
21 school. Also the majority of the parents cannot
22 afford the fee for before and after care. Ninety

1 dollars or more each month is a lot of money for
2 parents to pay if the household income is 20 or
3 25,000 per year. Parents who may have one, two, or
4 more children -- school-aged children along with
5 household expenses, this would, I am sure, create a
6 hardship. A lot of parents have jobs. If you don't
7 work, you don't get paid or the boss would not allow
8 employees to arrive late.

9 I respectfully ask your agency to allocate
10 funding into Bruce Monroe before and after care
11 program. With funding there should be a solution to
12 make make before and after care less expensive for
13 the parents and grant slots for all parents who have
14 a need for before and after care.

15 It saddens me to see children standing in
16 front of the school waiting outside each day for the
17 school doors to open because the parents must work
18 and there is not enough space or services that are
19 affordable for the parents. And this may be the only
20 solution many parents have. So it's very important
21 for the community, for Bruce Monroe that we have this
22 program because a lot of parents have to work. Some

1 parents are training or in college and for me, I am a
2 caregiver for my granddaughter and the first grader
3 is a great granddaughter. And it's a hardship for me
4 even though I am working. And we would appreciate
5 whatever the school will allocate for us.

6 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Thank you.

7 [PAUSE]

8 MS. ROSARIO: Hi, my name is Rosario.

9 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Ms. Rosario, can
10 you put the microphone close to your mouth? Thank
11 you.

12 MS. ROSARIO: (speaking in Spanish)

13 INTERPRETER: So my name is Rosario and I
14 am a parent at Bruce Monroe and my children are in
15 pre-K, three, and four and I'm just beginning to get
16 to know the school.

17 MS. ROSARIO: (Speaking in Spanish)

18 INTERPRETER: I am concerned about the
19 modernization of the school. I have seen things like
20 peeling paint, and I know that lead in the blood is not
21 good.

22 MS. ROSARIO: (Speaking in Spanish)

1 INTERPRETER: I would like you to please
2 increase the amount given for our modernization so
3 that I can be sure that my children are learning in a
4 place that's safe.

5 MS. ROSARIO: (Speaking in Spanish)

6 INTERPRETER: Thank you.

7 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Thank you.

8 MS. WILLIAMS: My name is Kamaly Williams.
9 And I'm a parent at Bruce Monroe Parkview. I want to
10 touch on parent coordinator. We had a parent
11 coordinator last year, but they took it away from us
12 this year because we are new and up and running with
13 the PTU. We need that parent coordinator support for
14 the PTU because this is the first year that we've
15 done PTU.

16 And then I also want to touch on the
17 modernization. They promised that we would get the
18 old space back, but we're still in Parkview and
19 Parkview still have a lot of issues that's going on
20 with the building itself. I think they did phase
21 one, we never got phase two and three. I think we
22 were supposed to be done in 2017 with the full

1 complete modernization. And that's all I wanted to
2 talk about today.

3 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Thank you.

4 MS. AMICK: Hi, how are you. My name is
5 Lena Amick. Thank you for hearing us all today. And
6 I'm a bilingual parent organizer with Teaching for
7 Change which is a D.C.-based nonprofit whose mission
8 is building social justice starting in the classroom.
9 And I'm also a Ward one resident. I live really
10 close to Bruce Monroe at Parkview. And Teaching for
11 Change partners directly with six -- this year with
12 six D.C. public schools to engage parents as
13 effective advocates and partners for their children's
14 education. We've been working to build parent power
15 and bring parents and teachers together for more than
16 15 years and schools serving predominantly low-income
17 immigrant, Latino, and African-American families.

18 Teaching for Change has a nationally
19 recognized approach to family engagement and a rich
20 history of partnering with D.C. public schools.

21 And I want to begin by emphasizing and
22 echoing the concerns that the parents brought here

1 today who have been working really hard caring for
2 their schools. Especially the need for free,
3 enriching after school programs so that no students
4 are left behind. I know that that's a concern not
5 just for Bruce Monroe, but also several other schools
6 that are struggling with that.

7 But mainly I'm here to discuss the need
8 for funding and additional resources to be put
9 towards family engagement in D.C. school. Through
10 our work with schools engaging low-income Black,
11 Latino, and immigrant families over the last 15
12 years, at Teaching for Change we've seen that schools
13 achieve more with family than without. With the
14 right support for the school we've seen families who
15 would otherwise be marginalized increase their
16 children's academic success through engaging meetings
17 with teachers. We've seen students' interest grow in
18 reading because parents have read with them in the
19 classroom. We've seen teachers resolve behavior
20 issues by effectively partnering with families, and
21 we've seen parents partner with principals to find
22 community solutions to school-wide challenges.

1 In our partner schools parents of color
2 are leaders who tend community gardens, they organize
3 cultural events with students. They wage campaigns
4 to combat bullying. They assist the teachers in a
5 million different ways and they show their children
6 that both parents and teachers are working together
7 for their well being.

8 And research also shows that when parents
9 are engaged, you're probably familiar, that student
10 test scores improve, that their behavior is more
11 positive, and that they feel more connected and
12 supported at the school.

13 We have also direct evidence of this from
14 a study that we have done in DCPS at our partner
15 school in Ward eight, Teaching for Change analyzed
16 the reading scores, the DIBELS and TRC of children in
17 grades K through five of the 23 most active parents
18 in the school and this analysis was from 2013 to '14
19 and we found out that students whose parents were
20 highly involved showed two to three times more growth
21 on reading assessments in comparison to their peers.
22 So it's not just an effort to bring parents in

1 because we like the community but it's something that
2 really works for improving the growth of our students
3 in not just test scores, but that's one way to
4 measure.

5 We also recognize that DCPS makes really
6 great efforts to support family engagement in super
7 important ways through the Office of Family
8 Engagement, the Language Access Division, and the New
9 Community Access teams, to name a few of the
10 examples.

11 Still there is great support that schools
12 need within their walls to challenge the structural
13 inequalities that our students and families suffer.
14 Schools and students lose out when they leave their
15 Black, Latino, and immigrant parents at the door or
16 only invite them to volunteer in manual labor, or
17 only to raise money or just in other scripted roles.
18 So we think that schools though don't always have
19 models for how to engage parents in other ways until
20 we want to -- what our work tries to do and what we
21 want you to do as well is to continue to find ways to
22 build that support for student -- for schools to be

1 able to be effective at engaging the families.

2 And some suggestions that we have for that
3 are funding for parent coordinators and parent
4 centers in schools beyond the 1 percent Title I
5 designation for family engagement.

6 The schools we work in that have a parent
7 coordinator on staff are worlds ahead in terms of
8 family engagement. That study that I mentioned
9 before came from a school in which the parent
10 coordinator had been there for four years working
11 with families and engaging them. Parent coordinators
12 orient parents to the school, help parents access
13 resources, and connect parents with teachers, and
14 often serve as a cultural connector between parents'
15 home cultures and the school.

16 And then the parents' center as a physical
17 space as a resource hub and a welcoming place for
18 parents to build relationships with each other and
19 with the school. A physical space center is
20 necessary so that parents can interact without
21 disrupting in the hallway or disrupting student
22 learning, but also build those relationships that

1 allow them to engage.

2 We also are asking for more funding for
3 increased language access. Parents need to be able
4 to understand school procedures, policy changes,
5 student progress and how to access resources in order
6 to effectively support their children's education.
7 But they need those resources -- schools need those
8 resources for interpretation and translation into
9 parents' home languages including interpreters for
10 events and conferences. Translated materials from
11 DCPS and training staff to use the language line and
12 interpreters.

13 And finally we ask for funding for
14 professional development and support for our
15 principals so they can be as effective as they want
16 to be in engaging families to do these things that
17 they would like to see.

18 So thank you so much. We really
19 appreciate your time in listening to the community's
20 concerns. Thank you very much.

21 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Thank you. We have
22 two more testifiers, is that right? Okay.

1 MS. D'AURORA: Twenty-nine and then number
2 30.

3 MS. ZIMNY: Hi, good evening.

4 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Good evening. Can
5 you come closer to the microphone?

6 MS. ZIMNY: Yes, ma'am. Is this better?

7 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Yes.

8 MS. ZIMNY: Okay. Thank you for your
9 time. My name is Stephanie Zimny and I'm the ANC
10 Commissioner and in ANC6A06, the community in which
11 Minor Elementary School resides. There's a lot of
12 exciting things going on at Minor Elementary School
13 right now. There's a newly invigorated parent LSAT,
14 parent/teacher organization, and all these things
15 have led to creation of a visioning committee.

16 Minor has traditionally been an
17 underperforming school and enrollment is actually
18 less than school capacity at this point. One of the
19 things that the visioning committee is trying to do
20 is to figure out what kind of school Minor wants to
21 be, international baccalaureate, an immersion
22 program, a STEM school, a STEAM school, the

1 principal, the parents, the community believe that
2 picking a vision for the school will really help to
3 invigorate the enrollment and figure out, you know,
4 how to -- how to improve the school.

5 One of the things that has come about as a
6 result of conversations with the community and with
7 parents is the possibility of an immersion program at
8 Minor. This has generated a lot of excitement and a
9 lot of conversation within neighbors and the
10 community.

11 The principal a Minor Elementary School
12 says that one of the things that really inhibits the
13 growth and the educational opportunities at Minor is
14 that parents don't stay, that people will go there
15 for pre-K three, pre-K four, and then move out or
16 leave the neighborhood or school.

17 Since I'm an ANC Commissioner, I talk to a
18 lot of people in the neighborhood, people with young
19 children who are not ready to go into school yet or
20 are just entering pre-K three. And having an
21 immersion program at Minor they say would be a game
22 changer for them. It would mean the difference

1 between saying, I don't know what we're going to do
2 when my child turns school age, or we might go to
3 Minor, we might see what's available too. If there
4 is an immersion program we would definitely stay in
5 the neighborhood, we would stay in our home, we would
6 invest in our community and we would want our child
7 to attend school at Minor.

8 So I am asking that DCPS allocate the
9 funding and the resources to implement an immersion
10 program at Minor Elementary School. I really think
11 that this could make a huge difference in Minor
12 Elementary School, the neighborhood, the community,
13 and for the families who would attend Minor.

14 Thank you for your time.

15 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Thank you.

16 [PAUSE]

17 MS. SANDERS: Good evening Chancellor
18 Henderson and members of the committee. My name is
19 Jimell Sanders, one of the cofounders of D.C.
20 Language Immersion Project. And I live in the
21 Deanwood community in Ward Seven.

22 I want to first thank you, Chancellor, for

1 the initiatives that are -- that you're supporting in
2 Ward seven. I live across the street from Ron Brown
3 Middle School and I can tell you that the Deanwood
4 community is thrilled that the school will house the
5 Empowering Men of Color High School. The Deanwood
6 community wants to ensure that the program is allowed
7 to do something powerful and significant for our
8 young men.

9 We are also thrilled that our requests for
10 a Spanish dual language program at Houston Elementary
11 School was accepted. The Deanwood community is
12 looking forward to our children having this
13 opportunity and its accompanying benefits. We're
14 also foreseeing and planning for increased enrollment
15 at Houston due to the program.

16 We have ethnic and socioeconomic diversity
17 within Ward Seven. That's not reflected in our DCPS
18 schools. We need sought-after programs such as the
19 Empowering Men of Color High School and dual language
20 to attract these families. Creating a pathway to the
21 middle class demands that we close the skills gap and
22 expose them to different role models.

1 After reviewing cost considerations from
2 the Office of Language Opposition, Houston Elementary
3 will require some additional funding each year for
4 classroom and library materials to grow the program
5 through the fifth grade.

6 My final request for Houston Elementary
7 and other DCPS dual language programs is that DCPS
8 find a cohort of committed teachers to obtain
9 bilingual education specific training such as the
10 masters in bilingual education from American
11 University with the challenges in recruiting,
12 excellent bilingual teachers and English-only
13 teachers trained in bilingual education DCPS needs to
14 expand training opportunities for existing talent.

15 Wonderful plans are in place to bring
16 innovative programming and modernization to Ron Brown
17 Middle School and Houston Elementary. We want these
18 schools to become two of the most respected,
19 sought-after and highly rates schools within the
20 city.

21 Thank you.

22 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Thank you.

1 Okay. Can I respectfully as for a break
2 for just five minutes and then I can come back and
3 hear some more? Super.

4 (Brief recess taken.)

5 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: All right. Thank
6 you for indulging me in that quick break. We have
7 about three more people, I think, who are going to
8 testify before we wrap up this evening. So do you
9 know what numbers? Okay.

10 MR. MORRIS: Hi, my name is Vincent
11 Morris. I'm the past president of the PTA at the
12 Cluster School and I apologize. I did not sign up in
13 advance because I had to bring my older daughter to
14 soccer practice and I wasn't sure how long that would
15 take. But I'm grateful for the opportunity to talk
16 to you and thank you for coming here.

17 I want to apologize for the turnout. I
18 know most parents who are DCPS parents care a lot
19 about schools. Clearly there's a problem with your
20 outreach because there should be more parents here.
21 A lot of people care about what's happening. But
22 thank you for coming and I think you're doing a fine

1 job.

2 I have a couple of quick things I want to
3 hit and I'll sort of take your answer offline if need
4 be, but I just want to make a few points that I care
5 about.

6 One, I really would encourage you to the
7 extent that you can to revisit the boundary process
8 again. I was really disappointed with the outcome
9 because I think the only way to really make some good
10 progress in school is for parents to care about the
11 schools in their neighborhood. And right now that
12 doesn't happen. Too many parents, as you know, get
13 in their car to bring their children to school. So I
14 really want to work on that and I hope that you'll
15 take that on again.

16 (Laughter.)

17 MR. MORRIS: I know you --

18 [SIMULTANEOUS CONVERSATION]

19 MR. MORRIS: -- have bigger fish to fry,
20 but I'm just putting it on the record that that's
21 what I think should happen.

22 I want to also say that I know that in

1 general -- I've seen it at our school and other
2 schools that the construction projects are done
3 during the summertime months. This school is
4 beautiful, but it's been going on for five years and
5 it is not very efficient. I think that there should
6 be a process where you relocate schools and you do
7 the renovation with some continuity. I don't think
8 it's a good system and I'm concerned about the
9 implications for the renovation that's pending at
10 Watkins Elementary and all across the city because I
11 think it's very inefficient the way it's been done.

12 I think very strongly you should consider
13 -- and I know this has been put forward before, but I
14 think you should really consider replicating walls.
15 You have high schools that are beautiful structures
16 that are under enrolled. You have Walls which is
17 overenrolled and is a beautiful structure. I think
18 you ought to go with what parents and students are
19 saying which is, they like the model that you created
20 at Walls. So I think you ought to find some way to
21 replicate that.

22 I live here in the northeast side of the

1 city. I think there should be something in the
2 northeast side of the city that is an approximation
3 of what Walls does.

4 I also think very strongly you should
5 revisit the My D.C. Won, the lottery system you have.
6 I think it's a real mistake for you, for the system
7 to essentially make it easier for parents to opt out
8 of the public school and go into charters. I
9 understand the motivation behind it, but I think it
10 was a bad mistake. I talk to parents every day who
11 are in traditional public school as I am. I'm a
12 parent of three D.C. Public School students, two of
13 whom attend this school, and one attends Watkins
14 Elementary. We are committed to traditional public
15 school education. And what I find when I talk to
16 other parent is that many of them say, ah, why not do
17 the lottery, it's so easy. Why not see what else is
18 out there? I think it was a bad strategic mistake
19 and I wish you would revisit it and make it easier or
20 harder for parents to opt out of public school and
21 easier for them to stay committed to their local
22 neighborhood school.

1 The other point I wanted to make is I
2 think I've heard the administration at our school and
3 I've heard other schools mention this, and I know you
4 care about this, student satisfaction. I don't think
5 it should be a huge issue. I know when I was in
6 school I didn't love school, but I still went to
7 school. I learned sort of despite myself. I think
8 focusing on whether students like their school is a
9 waste of resources. Respectfully, I admire what
10 you're trying to do. As I said, I think you're doing
11 a fantastic job as Chancellor. I just think that's a
12 waste of resources. I would rather put it into other
13 elements of school.

14 And then the final thing I'll say is, I
15 strongly, strongly disagree with this effort to try
16 to make every library in every DCPS facility the best
17 it can be. The city of -- the District of Columbia
18 has one of the best library systems in the whole
19 country. We have 25 branches. Every single ward has
20 at least three or four branches. They are close to
21 parents, they are close to students. Every student
22 has access to those libraries. Trying to replicate

1 high-quality libraries in each elementary, or middle
2 school, or high schools is redundant, is a waste of
3 resources. My children love to read, but they don't
4 go to the library to read. I mean, they don't go to
5 the school library to read. They go to the public
6 library to read. When they're here at school, their
7 teachers are teaching them. They take electives or
8 specials, and they're in the core subjects. They
9 don't have a lot of time to go to the library.

10 So as much as I'd love to say, if money
11 grew on trees, sure, make every single DCPS library
12 the best it can be, put in another 5,000 volumes at
13 each campus. I don't think it's a good use of
14 resources. I think you should find ways to partner
15 with the D.C. public library system. I think we
16 should find ways to get parents to make that effort
17 to take their children to the public library system
18 and I think we should put more of our resources into
19 the curriculum and not into the library.

20 Thank you again for coming and being here.

21 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Thank you.

22 MS. D'AURORA: Next we have Antoine

1 Holmes.

2 Next we have Tacha Parr.

3 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: And also, who is
4 next after Tacha? Okay. So Tacha is our final
5 testifier.

6 MS. PARK: Hello. Good evening. First I
7 would like to piggyback on what Ben said about the
8 books. My experience -- I have one child at Tyler, I
9 had two children at Watkins. My experience while I
10 was working with a parent group at Watkins is that
11 the teachers' classrooms had as many, if not more
12 books than the library. And year after year we're
13 petitioned as the PTA for funds to increase the books
14 that are on the campus, but they're never in one
15 central place. So it was a lottery done that see a
16 lot of money going after the same thing. Each year
17 you need more level books. Where are they going?
18 You know, where are those resources going? So if
19 that could be looked at.

20 Also, I was reminded this evening of the
21 story of a gentleman who was complaining about his
22 feet hurting and he was complaining to a gentleman

1 who had no feet. I live in Ward Seven on Benning
2 Ridge. And the concept of a community school is
3 nonexistent there. The school that is there is
4 troublesome and I would not feel safe for my children
5 to go there. So I'm one of those parents who is
6 driving all over the city trying to find the perfect
7 fit for my child. Because although my neighborhood
8 doesn't have it, I believe it exists and they deserve
9 it.

10 Also, I would love if DCPS addressed an
11 issue that has been talked about over and over and
12 over again in every study over the last ten, 15, 100
13 years, class size. You have classes with 25 kids and
14 one teacher. There is no way you could reach all of
15 those children. Those children are self-teaching
16 themselves. They have to be self-motivated, they
17 have to -- they have to be self-directed at an early
18 age for that model to work.

19 I would love to see resources put into
20 place so that the class sizes can be smaller and that
21 the teachers feel that they can reach these students
22 without missing some. And that's it for me. Thank

1 you.

2 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Thank you.

3 Just a word. I think I want to thank
4 everybody who came out tonight to share their
5 testimony. I think I heard a couple things. First
6 of all, I heard committed parents and families who
7 want DCPS to be the best that it can be. And I
8 fundamentally believe that a school district can only
9 be good if parents are demanding. And so I thank you
10 for engaging with us that way.

11 I also heard a myriad of strategies and
12 lots of different priorities for people. And the not
13 so exciting thing about my job is I never have all of
14 the money to fund all of the priorities that
15 different families and communities have. And so we
16 ultimately have to make choices which we'll have to
17 make in this budget season.

18 But there is not a one-size-fits all
19 approach. In some cases libraries are really
20 important and in some cases they are not to other
21 people. In some cases, you know, being able to go to
22 their neighborhood school is really important, in

1 some cases that's not a priority. And we have the
2 very difficult job of creating a school district that
3 meets the needs of lots of different kinds of people.

4
5 So it's a challenge, but it's a challenge
6 that we're committed to trying to figure out as best
7 as we possibly can.

8 The other sort of not so exciting thing
9 about my job is we all want much more than we
10 currently have at a much faster rate. And we are
11 driving as hard as possible. We are working with the
12 mayor and her team to try to figure out what our
13 resource situation is going to be. But our
14 commitment to you is to try to make sure that we help
15 you understand what the variety of costs are and some
16 of the tradeoffs that we have to make. Many of you
17 have engaged online with us through our engage
18 DCPS.org website. And so even families who can't
19 make it out still have a way to engage with us around
20 the budget. We want to do more of that.

21 Tonight, you know, usually we sit down on
22 the same level as you. We're sitting up here because

1 tonight we're being televised so that families who
2 couldn't make it can actually see what was happening
3 and weigh in through the District Knowledge Network.
4 We are committed to continuing to engage folks around
5 the budget.

6 This is the beginning of the budget
7 conversation and not the end. And I want to thank
8 everybody who pointed out that more time is better
9 for engagement. That's our desire. And so we want
10 you to become a part of your local school advisory
11 team. If you're not, we want you to go to the DCPS
12 interactive data center which is on our website and
13 you can see what your schools have been funded for
14 and those kinds of things. And we want you to visit
15 engage DCPS.org so that we can continue the
16 conversation around what our fiscal year '17 budget
17 looks like.

18 We'll be out in communities over the
19 coming weeks and we're going to continue this
20 conversation with all of you and with the broader
21 community. And we will continue to try to meet your
22 demands as hard and as fast as we have the money to

1 do so.

2 So thank you for coming tonight.

3 Was I supposed to say anything else?

4 Okay. Have a good evening and get home
5 safely.

6 (Whereupon, at 7:53 p.m., the meeting was
7 adjourned.)

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